

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, June 9, 1989

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RAHALL EDUCATION AND LABOR COMMITTEE COMPLETES ACTION ON PROGRAMS FOR WEST VIRGINIA

WASHINGTON D.C. - U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) recently applauded the actions taken by him and his colleagues on the Committee on Education and Labor for reporting out a bill that will increase the stipends paid to Older American's volunteers. Rahall said that the meager \$2.20 stipend per hour now paid to older volunteers, such as Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions, had not been raised for many years. "The increase is incremental," said Rahall. "It will go from \$2.20 to \$2.35 per hour in FY 1991 and to \$2.50 per hour in FY 1992.

Senior citizens eligible for service in both the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs in the past had to be low-income individuals in order to participate. The bill favorably reported by the Committee today would change that, allowing persons who are not low income to serve as foster grandparents and senior companion volunteers, but without stipends, and would allow this practice in the same communities that have Retired Senior Volunteer Programs (RSVP). Non low-income persons would have to be referred to the RSVP program first and a placement not be made before such persons could be designated a non-stipend foster grandparent or senior companion. Language was added to assure that ACTION cannot coerce projects into accepting or recruiting non-stipend volunteers.

"This small stipend for low income volunteers," said Rahall, "will allow these seniors to perhaps buy a few comforts of life they otherwise could not afford on low fixed incomes. When you think of the numbers of elderly people whose incomes are so small they often have to decide between heating and eating, the least we can do is to provide for modest relief by increasing their hourly pay for services so lovingly given. The experience and wisdom of their years are not wasted or ignored. Voluntarism is the backbone of this country and is present in ever increasing numbers in our schools, our service organizations, our churches, spreading out and delivering human and social services to those who need help."

The Committee also extended the VISTA volunteer program, "the only full time domestic volunteer program left that has an anti-poverty mandate," Rahall said. Of the several minor changes to VISTA in the bill, which was otherwise a simple extension of the Act, one was the creation of a new program of assistance by grants or contracts to nonprofit organizations whose principal purpose is the combatting of illiteracy and its associated problems for the identification, development, and dissemination of effective literacy materials and programs. Also, the VISTA program was opened up to allow Literacy Corps Volunteers to serve as volunteers in the regular VISTA Literacy Program.

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More than 100,000 Americans have served in VISTA since its inception in 1954. There are currently 2600 VISTA's serving in 600 anti-poverty projects in the U.S. Funding for VISTA was increased from \$21.6 million to \$29.7 million beginning in FY 1990.

The RSVP program authorized funding level was increased from \$31 to \$38 million in FY 1990; the Foster Grandparent program increase was from \$58.7 million to \$69 million in FY 1990, and the Senior Companion program increased from \$28.6 million to \$33 million in FY 1990.

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COMPLETES ACTION ON PROGRAMS FOR WEST VIRGINIA RAHALL, EDUCATION AND LABOR COMMITTEE

WASHINGTON D.C. - U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) recently applauded the actions taken by him and his colleagues on the Committee on Education and Labor for reporting out a bill that will increase the stipends paid to older Americans' volunteers. Rahall said that the measure, H.R. 20, stipend per hour now paid to older volunteers, such as Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions, had not been raised for many years. "The increase is incremental," said Rahall. "It will go from \$2.30 to \$2.35 per hour in FY 1991 and to \$2.50 per hour in FY 1992."

Senior citizens eligible for service in both the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs in the past had to be low-income individuals in order to participate. The bill favorably reported by the Committee today would change that, allowing persons who are not low income to serve as Foster Grandparents and senior companion volunteers, but without stipends, and would allow this practice in the same communities that have hosted Senior Volunteer Programs (RSVP). Now low-income persons would have to be referred to the RSVP program first and a placement not be made before such persons could be designated a non-stipend Foster Grandparent or Senior Companion. Language was added to assure that ACTION cannot coerce projects into accepting or recruiting non-stipend volunteers.

"This small stipend for low income volunteers," said Rahall, "will allow these seniors to perhaps buy a few comforts of life they otherwise could not afford on low fixed incomes. When you think of the numbers of elderly people whose incomes are so small they often have to decide between heating and eating, the least we can do is to provide for modest relief by increasing their hourly pay for services so lovingly given. The experience and wisdom of their years are not wasted or ignored. Volunteerism is the backbone of this country and is present in ever increasing numbers in our schools, our service organizations, our churches, spreading out and delivering human and social services to those who need help."

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